



City of Santa Barbara
Mayor and Council Office

Memorandum

DATE: January 6, 2011

TO: Jim Armstrong, City Administrator

FROM: Dale Francisco, Councilmember
Frank Hotchkiss, Councilmember

SUBJECT: Request to agendize an item regarding a recommendation to SBCAG and to Caltrans that Santa Barbara's City Council supports transparency in the design review of nets as a possible alternative for suicide prevention at the Cold Spring Canyon Bridge.

Pursuant to Council Resolution No. 09-097 regarding the Conduct of City Council Meetings, we request that an item be placed on the Santa Barbara City Council Agenda regarding a recommendation to SBCAG regarding the design review process for the Cold Spring Arch Bridge suicide barrier project.

This item meets the following criteria as explained below.

- A. A substantive outline or summary of the information that will be presented to the City Council:

The installation of suicide barriers at Cold Spring Canyon Bridge has been a topic of controversy since 2005. In 2009, Caltrans decided to go forward with the installation of vertical suicide barrier fencing. After a successful legal challenge by Friends of the Bridge, Caltrans was ordered by Judge Anderle to halt the project and to revise and re-circulate its Draft EIR, on the grounds that it had failed to adequately identify alternative aesthetic and historic mitigations to the project, and that it had failed to specify which barrier design would be used.

Wayne Donaldson, the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and President Obama's appointee as chairman of the national Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, has recommended suicide nets as an effective design that will mitigate much of the aesthetic impact that would be imposed on this historic structure by Caltrans's current 9'7" tall mesh fence design.

Caltrans engineers worked with Donaldson and his staff to come up with a "capture net" design alternative, but after analyzing it Caltrans concluded that it would place an unacceptable load on the bridge. So far, Caltrans has been unwilling to share the engineering calculations on which this conclusion was based, citing Homeland Security concerns. In the interest of transparency and peer review, we hope that Caltrans will share its calculations with SHPO—there's no need to make this information, if truly sensitive, available to the general public. We hope that City Council will express its support for transparency in the interest of creating a true public consensus, and recommend this approach to SBCAG and to Caltrans.

- B. A concise statement of the specific action the City Council will be asked to take on the item:

That the Council inform its SBCAG representative Mayor Schneider of our support for a complete vetting of the SHPO-recommended alternative of suicide nets as a suicide prevention device at Cold Spring Canyon Bridge, by making available to the SHPO and his staff the engineering data upon which Caltrans's rejection of the suicide net was based.

- C. A statement of the reasons why the requesting party believes it is appropriate and within the jurisdiction of the City Council to consider this subject matter and to take the requested action.

It is appropriate for the City Council to consider this matter because the current Caltrans design which we have supported through prior SBCAG deliberations may in fact be inferior to that recommended by SHPO Donaldson. As a member of SBCAG, the organization whose funding has made this project possible, it is important that we advocate for complete transparency in the design review process.

cc: Mayor and Councilmembers
Steve Wiley, City Attorney